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CRAZIER THAN THE JOKER!
DEADLIER THAN RA'S AL GHUL!
INTRODUCING A VILLAIN FOR THE '80s!
BLACK MASK!

MACABRE AND MENACING, TURNING HIS BACK ON THE MIRROR, HE STRIDES FROM SANITY INTO SHADOW, A STRANGER WITHIN HIS OWN SKIN.
SOME NIGHT VERY SOON HE WILL LEAD AN ARMY FROM THE DARKNESS, SWEARING TO SLAY FIRST BRUCE WAYNE AND THEN--
BAT MAN
THIS IS THE STORY OF HIS BIZARRE ORIGIN.
BLACK MASK: LOSING FACE
DOUG MOENCH . TOM MANDRAKE . JOHN COSTANZA . ADRIENNE ROY . LEN WEIN
WRITER ARTIST LETTERER COLORIST EDITOR

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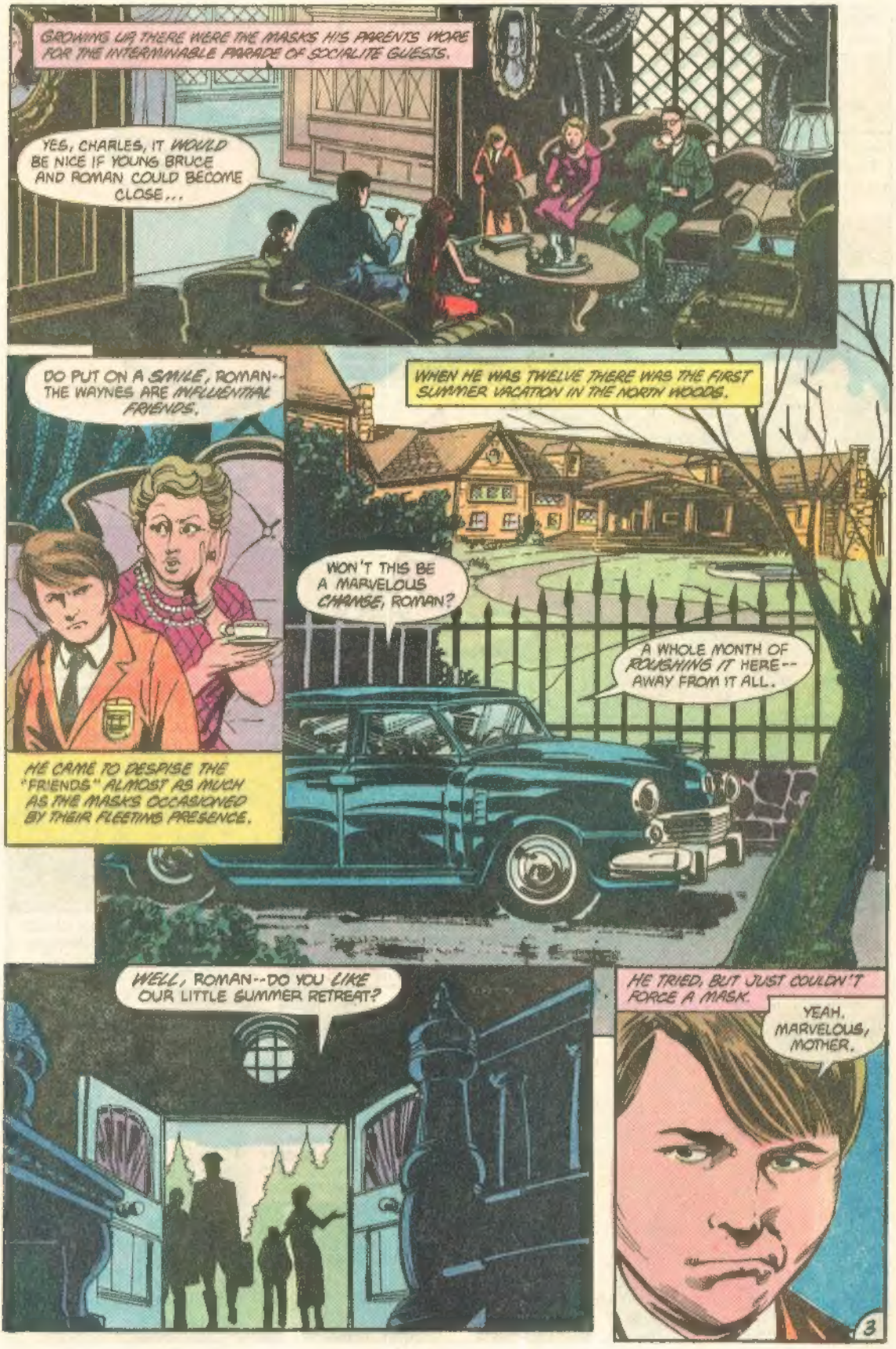
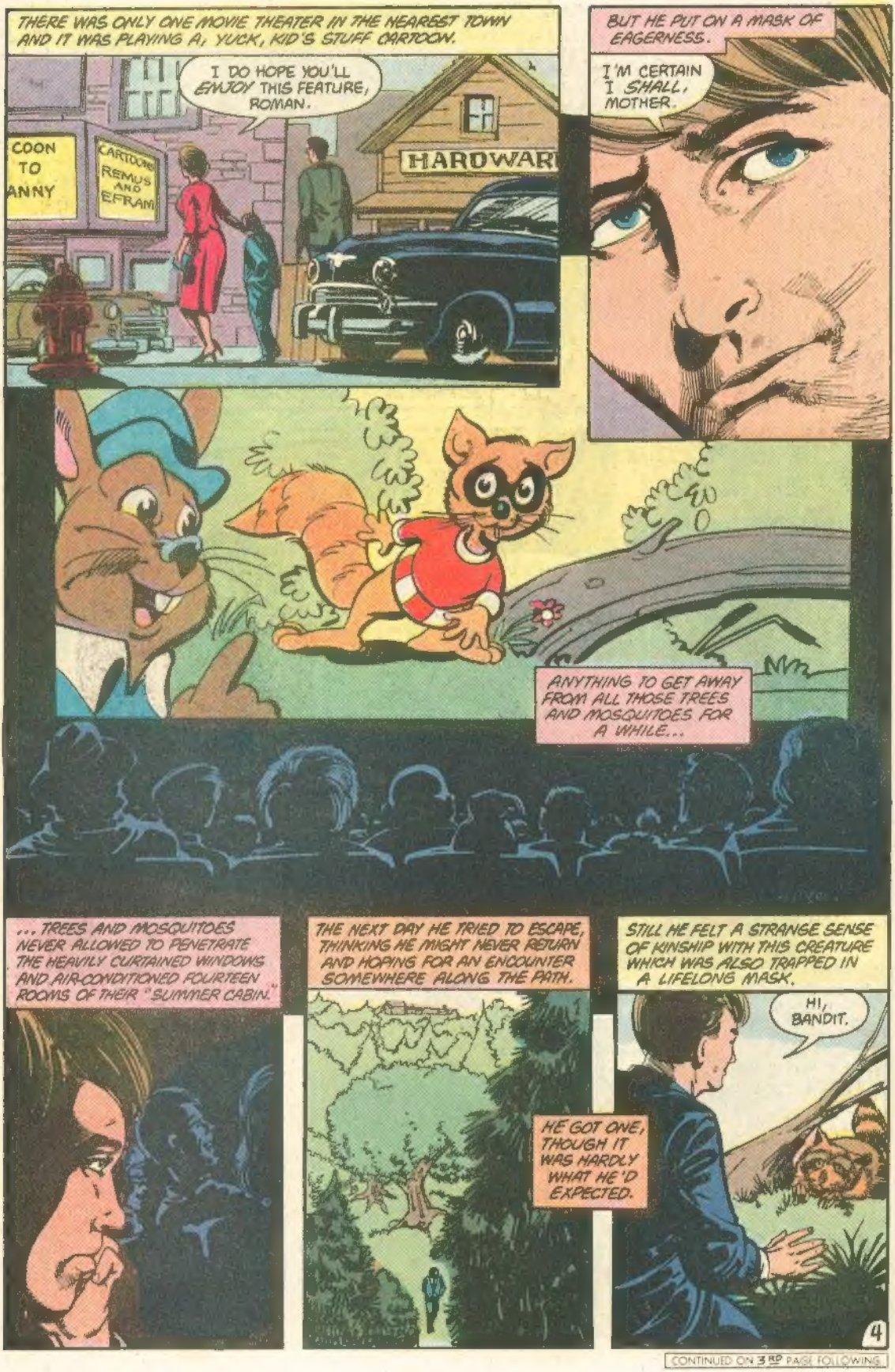
THE FIRST THING HE EVER SAW WAS A MASK.
AND THEN--
AH--!
OH MY GOD.
YOU... YOU DROPPED IT!
--PEOPLE FOREVER AFTER SAID THERE WAS SOMETHING STRANGE IN HIS EYES...
... A CERTAIN DULLNESS WHICH NEVER FULLY CONCEALED THE BURNINGS.
GOTHA
SCION TO SIONIS FORTUNE
YESTERDAY A SON, NICE ROMAN, WAS DELIVERED BY THE
MR. & MRS. THOMAS WAYNE RETURN FROM ABROAD, ALSO EXPECTING
WIFE OF CHARLES SIONIS, OWNER OF JANUS COSMETICS, MONOLITHIC INTERNATIONAL MAKE-UP FIRM VALUED AT 500 MILLION DOLLARS, THE BOUNCING BABY BOY IS EX-
THE PICTURE BOYS FROM THE GAZETTE ARE OUT IN THE HALL, DEAR, CLAMORING FOR THE HEIR'S FIRST PORTRAIT.
OH, CHARLES, COULDN'T YOU HAVE GIVEN ME TIME TO PREPARE?
AT LEAST LET ME PUT MY FACE ON...
NAIL POLISH
JANUS COSMETICS
JANUS COSMETICS
LIPSTICK
JANUS
JAN COS
2


GROWING UP THERE WERE THE MASKS HIS PARENTS WORE FOR THE INTERMINABLE PARADE OF SOCIALITE GUESTS.
YES, CHARLES, IT WOULD BE NICE IF YOUNG BRUCE AND ROMAN COULD BECOME CLOSE...
DO PUT ON A SMILE, ROMAN-- THE WAYNES ARE INFLUENTIAL FRIENDS.
HE CAME TO DESPISE THE "FRIENDS" ALMOST AS MUCH AS THE MASKS OCCASIONED BY THEIR FLEETING PRESENCE.
WHEN HE WAS TWELVE THERE WAS THE FIRST SUMMER VACATION IN THE NORTH WOODS.
WON'T THIS BE A MARVELOUS CHANGE, ROMAN?
A WHOLE MONTH OF ROUGHING IT HERE-- AWAY FROM IT ALL..
WELL, ROMAN--DO YOU LIKE OUR LITTLE SUMMER RETREAT?
HE TRIED, BUT JUST COULDN'T FORCE A MASK.
YEAH. MARVELOUS, MOTHER.
3


THERE WAS ONLY ONE MOVIE THEATER IN THE NEAREST TOWN AND IT WAS PLAYING A, YUCK, KID'S STUFF CARTOON.
I DO HOPE YOU'LL ENJOY THIS FEATURE, ROMAN.
COON TO ANNY
CARTOONS REMUS AND EFRAM
HARDWARE
BUT HE PUT ON A MASK OF EAGERNESS.
I'M CERTAIN I SHALL, MOTHER.
ANYTHING TO GET AWAY FROM ALL THOSE TREES AND MOSQUITOES FOR A WHILE...
... TREES AND MOSQUITOES NEVER ALLOWED TO PENETRATE THE HEAVILY CURTAINED WINDOWS AND AIR-CONDITIONED FOURTEEN ROOMS OF THEIR "SUMMER CABIN."
THE NEXT DAY HE TRIED TO ESCAPE, THINKING HE MIGHT NEVER RETURN AND HOPING FOR AN ENCOUNTER SOMEWHERE ALONG THE PATH.
HE GOT ONE, THOUGH IT WAS HARDLY WHAT HE'D EXPECTED.
STILL HE FELT A STRANGE SENSE OF KINSHIP WITH THIS CREATURE WHICH WAS ALSO TRAPPED IN A LIFELONG MASK.
HI, BANDIT.
4
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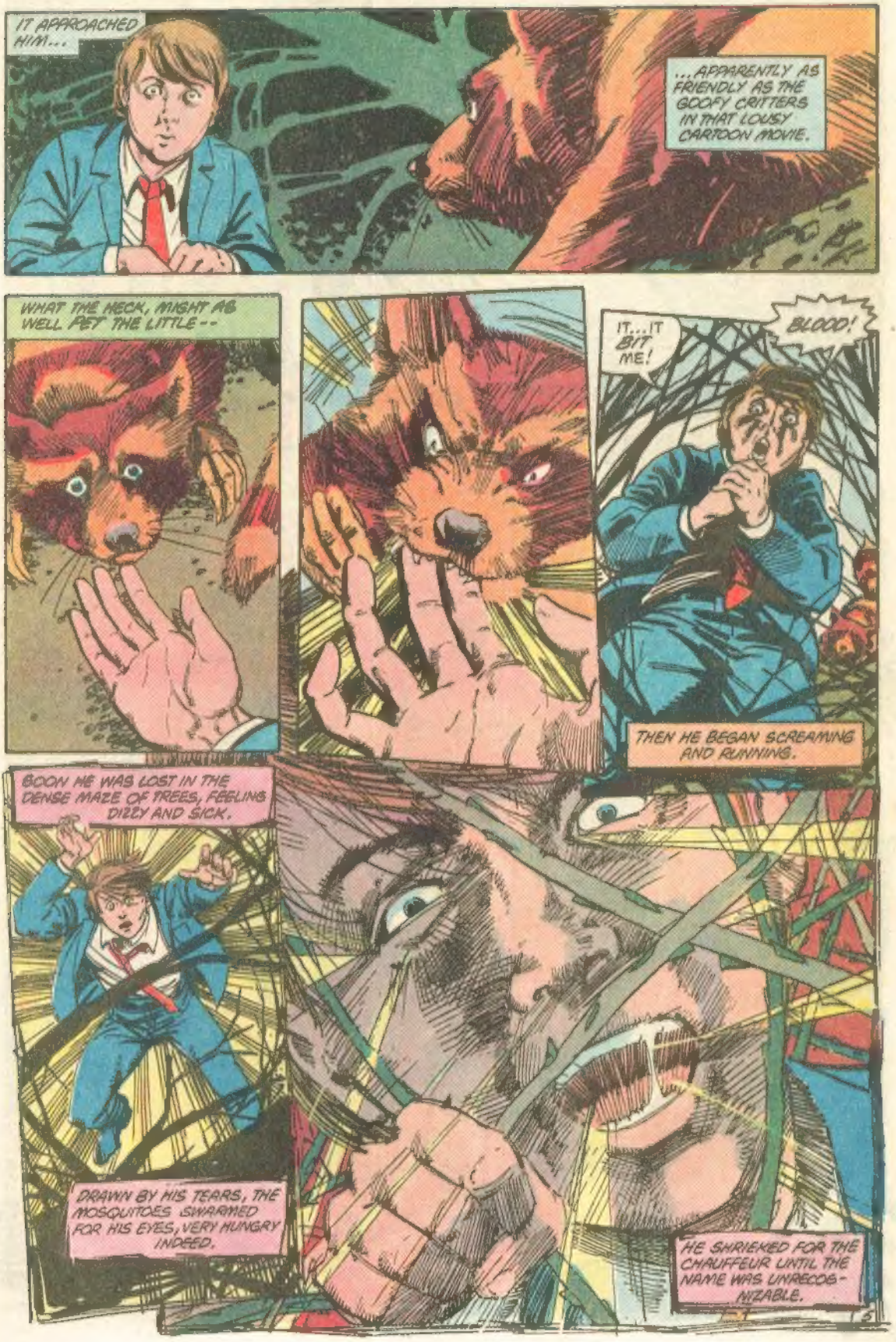
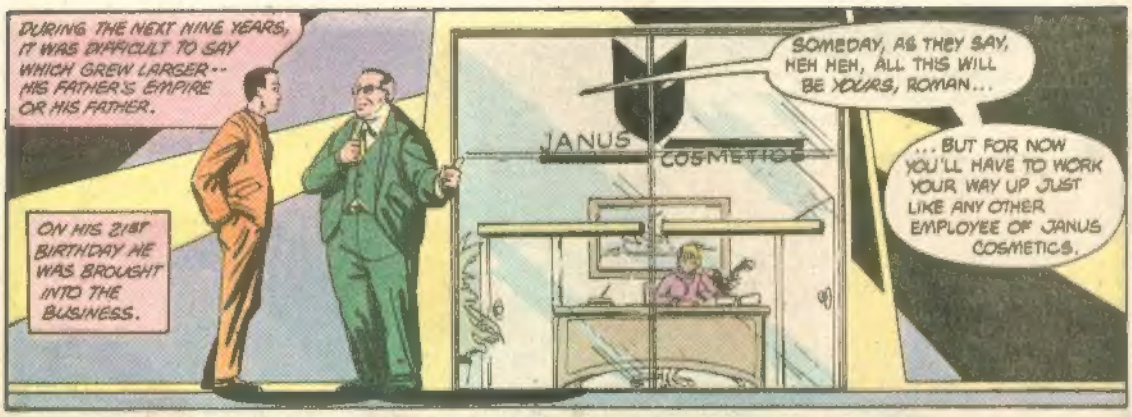
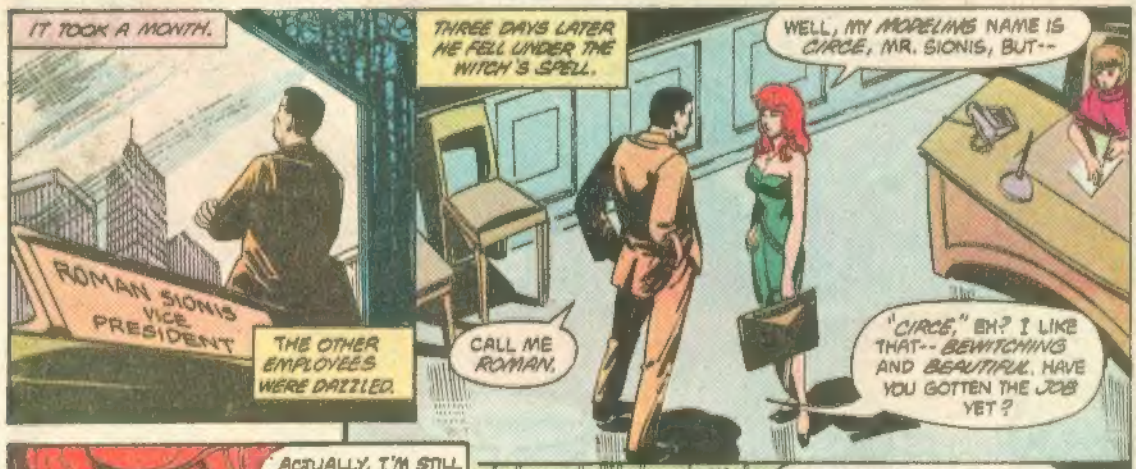

IT APPROACHED HIM...
...APPARENTLY AS FRIENDLY AS THE GOOFY CRITTERS IN THAT LOUSY CARTOON MOVIE.
WHAT THE HECK, MIGHT AS WELL PET THE LITTLE--
IT...IT BIT ME!
BLOOD!
THEN HE BEGAN SCREAMING AND RUNNING.
SOON HE WAS LOST IN THE DENSE MAZE OF TREES, FEELING DIZZY AND SICK.
DRAWN BY HIS TEARS, THE MOSQUITOES SWARMED FOR HIS EYES, VERY HUNGRY INDEED.
HE SHRIEKED FOR THE CHAUFFEUR UNTIL THE NAME WAS UNRECOGNIZABLE.

BY DARK HE WAS STUMBLING AND STAGGERING.
IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO TELL IF HIS EYES WERE SWELLING SHUT OR SIMPLY FAILING.
HE NEVER FELT THE FALL NOR WOULD HE EVER REMEMBER IT.
HE FELT VERY, VERY HOT BUT FROZEN AROUND THE EDGES, WHICH WERE TURNING FUZZY AND WEIGHTLESS.
BUT THAT WHICH FOLLOWED WOULD NEVER BE FORGOTTEN.
IT DRAGGED HIM STRAIGHT DOWN TO HELL.

THE NIGHTMARE CONTINUED FOREVER, AN ENDLESS MOVIE OF HIS OWN MAKING, PLAYED OUT SOMEWHERE DEEP BEHIND HIS FACE.
AND THEN...
WH-WHERE...?
YOU'RE FINE, ROMAN-- WE'LL BE GOING HOME SOON.
APPARENTLY YOU WERE BITTEN BY SOME SORT OF FILTHY RABID ANIMAL, BUT DON'T YOU WORRY-- YOUR FATHER HAD THE BEST AVAILABLE DOCTORS BROUGHT IN BY HELICOPTER.
...HE LIVED.
IT WAS THE CHAUFFEUR WHO'D FOUND HIM.
SO HE LIVED, AND HE RECOVERED, BUT AGAIN THERE WERE SUSPICIONS.
I TELL YOU HE'S NOT THE SAME BOY, CHARLES-- HIS EYES-- HE'S SO STRANGE...
HE'S BEEN STRANGE SINCE THE DAY HE WAS BORN, AND IF YOU'D HAVE LET ME SUE THAT INCOMPETENT BUTTER-FINGERED DOCTOR FOR MALPRACTICE...
WE'LL NOT GET INTO THAT AGAIN.
THE VERY IDEA-- DRAGGING OUR NAMES AND FACES THROUGH THE PAPERS IN A COMMON LAWSUIT.
LET'S JUST GET AWAY FROM THIS DREADFUL PLACE.
7


DURING THE NEXT NINE YEARS, IT WAS DIFFICULT TO SAY WHICH GREW LARGER-- HIS FATHER'S EMPIRE OR HIS FATHER.
ON HIS 21ST BIRTHDAY HE WAS BROUGHT INTO THE BUSINESS.
JANUS COSMETICS
SOMEDAY, AS THEY SAY, HEH HEH, ALL THIS WILL BE YOURS, ROMAN...
...BUT FOR NOW YOU'LL HAVE TO WORK YOUR WAY UP JUST LIKE ANY OTHER EMPLOYEE OF JANUS COSMETICS.


IT TOOK A MONTH.
ROMAN SIONIS VICE PRESIDENT
THE OTHER EMPLOYEES WERE DAZZLED.
THREE DAYS LATER HE FELL UNDER THE WITCH'S SPELL.
WELL, MY MODELING NAME IS CIRCE, MR. SIONIS, BUT--
CALL ME ROMAN.
"CIRCE," EH? I LIKE THAT-- BEWITCHING AND BEAUTIFUL. HAVE YOU GOTTEN THE JOB YET?

ACTUALLY, I'M STILL WAITING FOR MY INTERVIEW WITH--
YOU'RE HIRED-- ARRANGE WITH MY SECRETARY TO SHOW YOUR GRATITUDE OVER DINNER.
THE SPELL DEEPENED.
HAVE YOU EVER MODELED COSMETICS BEFORE, CIRCE?
FREQUENTLY. REVLON, COTY...
STOP RIGHT THERE.

FROM NOW ON YOUR FACE BELONGS TO JANUS. IN FACT, THINK OF YOURSELF AS BEING... WEDDED TO ME.
OF COURSE.
TO YOU, MR. SIO--ROMAN?
EVENTUALLY I WILL BE JANUS, YOU KNOW... PERHAPS SOONER THAN EITHER OF US THINKS.
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CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.

AN EXORCISM WAS ATTEMPTED.
DO YOU REALIZE IT'S FOUR IN THE MORNING -- AND A COMMON MODEL, LITTLE BETTER THAN A STREETWALKER! WELL, I WON'T HEAR OF IT!
BUT, MOTHER --
SILENCE, ROMAN! FOR ONCE YOUR MOTHER IS ABSOLUTELY RIGHT -- AND YOU CAN JUST FORGET THE GIRL RIGHT NOW.
I'M HAVING HER FIRED IN THE MORNING.
VERY WELL, FATHER... MOTHER.
I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT.
GOOD NIGHT.
HRMPH.
BUT IT WAS A MASK.
BACK SO SOON, ROMAN?
I TOLD YOU, CIRCE... IT MIGHT BE SOONER THAN EITHER OF US REALIZED...
AND SURROUNDED BY THE WITCH'S ENCHANTING FACE --
-- THEY SEALED A CERTAIN FATE.
9

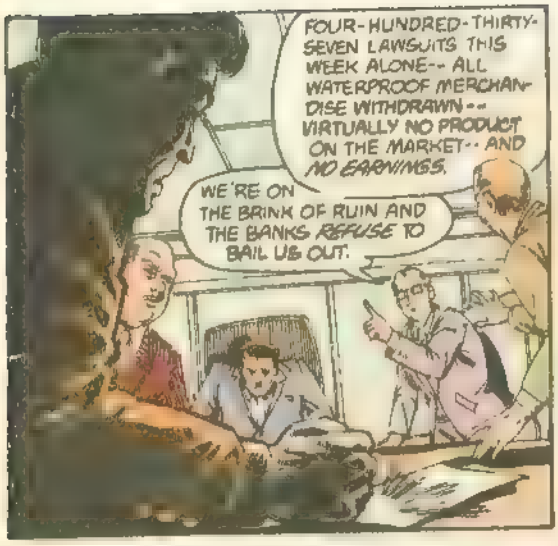
THE FOLLOWING SUMMER THE KING AND THE QUEEN DIED IN A FIRE...
OF SUSPICIOUS ORIGINS
...YET . ORIGINS NEVER CHALLENGED
I'M HONORED BY YOUR COMING HERE IN PERSON
...BUT I CAN ONLY REPEAT WHAT I'VE ALREADY TOLD YOUR MEN, COMMISSIONER GORDON
I WAS INDEED WITH ROMAN ALL NIGHT
THEY WERE DISPLAYED WITH THEIR MATCHING EBONY LIDS SEALED
ACCEPTABLE DEATH MASKS COULD HARDLY BE SALVAGED FROM SUCH CONFLAGRATION
STILL, HE FOUND HIMSELF WONDERING IF JANUS HAD YET TAPPED THE LUCRATIVE MARKET FOR MORTICIANS' COSMETICS

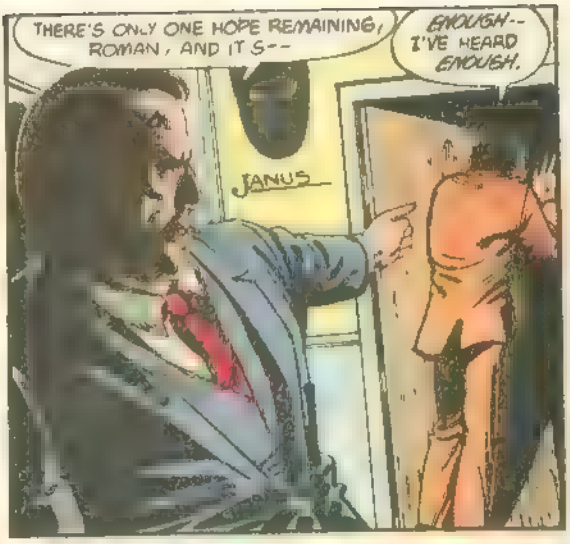
HE TOOK OVER THE NEXT DAY.
ROMAN SIONIS PRESIDENT
HEADING THE EMPIRE WHICH FASHIONED MASKS FOR THOSE LOATHING THEIR TRUE FACES.
ROMAN SIONIS PRESID
UPPS--!
ROMAN SIONIS PRESIDENT
MY FAULT
AND WHAT'S IN THERE?
AH, HERE YOU ARE, ROMAN
THAT'S OUR PUBLIC RELATIONS DIVISION, MR SION'S--
--A SUITE OF FIVE OFFICES DEVOTED TO KEEPING OUR CUSTOMERS SATIS--
FIVE ROOMS IS JUST THE RIGHT SIZE
CLEAR ALL THAT CRAP OUT OF THERE.
--AND HAVE AN INTERIOR DECORATOR FURNISH FOUR OF THE ROOMS AS AN APARTMENT.
B-BUT--
TELL HIM, HER, OR IT TO LEAVE THE LARGEST ROOM EMPTY
I'LL FILL THAT ONE MYSELF
AND HE DID.
THERE'S ANOTHER CRATE IN THERE FOR YOU, ROMAN-- NEW ONES - FROM NEW GUINEA, I BELIEVE
THANK YOU, CARCE

STRUCK BY THE HALLMARK OF HIS LIFE, HE BEGAN COLLECTING THE REAL THINGS
BY THE SCORES
MADE BY THE HANDS OF PRIMITIVES...
HIS WORK WENT ON.
NO.
THE "INVISIBLE" APPROACH TO COSMETICS IS OLD HAT--IF WE'RE SELLING SOMETHING, IT SHOULD BE TANGIBLE, VISIBLE.
IT'S THE MASK THAT'S IMPORTANT, NOT THE FACE AND THE MASK MUST BE EXTREME
JANUS IS TAKING A BOLD NEW APPROACH, GENTLEMEN.
I'VE DECIDED TO GEAR OUR ENTIRE PRODUCTION TO BE IN THE FOREFRONT, LEADING THE WAY WITH A RADICAL NEW LINE. . AND THIS IS ITS FACE
CIRCE--YOU CAN COME IN NOW
GOOD, LORD!
WELL, GENTLEMEN--WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE NEW JANUS "FACE-PAINT" COSMETICS?
12

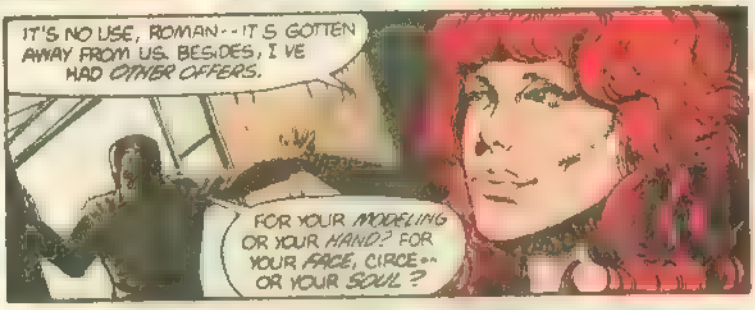
F-FRANKLY, MR SIONIS, I BELIEVE IT'S A MISTAKE TO GEAR OUR ENTIRE OUTPUT TO SOMETHING SO... EXTREME
I, I MUST AGREE, MR SIONIS
BOY GEORGE AND CYNDI LAUPER ARE ARE CARTOONS
I DON'T THINK PEOPLE IN THE STREET REALLY WANT TO LOOK LIKE--
AND I THINK YOU RE WRONG
AND HE WAS BOSS--
JANUS COSMETICS
NEW
1/2 OFF
SALE
--FOR BETTER OR WORSE.
THE "FACE-PAINT" LINE IS A FINANCIAL DISASTER, ROMAN.
OUR CONSUMERS HAVE SHIFTED TO OTHER BRANDS-- AND EVEN THOUGH WE'VE HASTILY GONE BACK TO OUR REGULAR LINE, IT'S TOO LATE.
THE CUSTOMERS ARE NOW IN THE HABIT OF BUYING REVLON, COTY--
ENOUGH I VE HEARD ENOUGH
AND THEY MAY NEVER COME BACK, ROMAN.
THE DAMAGE MAY BE IRREPARABLE
AND SO HE LOST FACE FOR THE FIRST TIME..
...BUT MOST ASSUREDLY NOT THE LAST
I WANT YOU TO WORK UP SOMETHING NEW -- MAKEUP WHICH IS TRADITIONAL IN APPEARANCE BUT WHICH OFFERS SOMETHING NO OTHER BRAND CAN.
JANUS COSMETICS
Research and Development
I DON'T CARE WHAT IT IS AS LONG AS IT'S REVOLUTIONARY, WHAT THE SILICON CHIP WAS TO THE TRANSISTOR--
-- AND THERE S A $100,000 BONUS FOR THE MAN WHO DOES IT

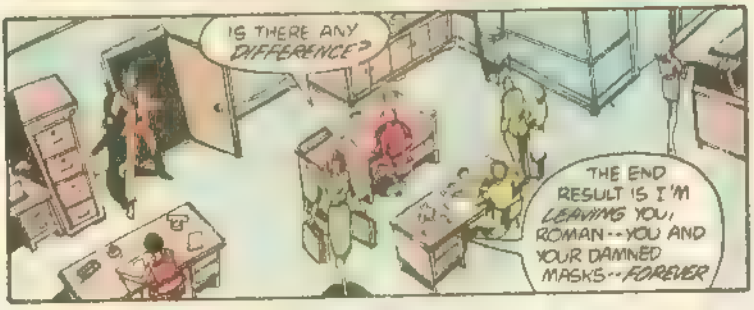
THAT NIGHT
WHERE'S CIRCE?
SHE, AH, SAID SHE FELT LIKE SPENDING SOME TIME AT HER OLD APARTMENT, SIR...
AND THAT SHE WOULD THEN BE GOING OUT
A WEEK LATER
--WATER INSOLUBLE MAKEUP, MR. SIONIS, WHICH WON'T COME OFF IN THE RAIN OR WHEN THE WOMAN GOES SWIMMING OR--
PERFECT-- PUT IT INTO PRODUCTION IMMEDIATELY
I'M AFRAID THAT'S PREMATURE, MR SIONIS
YOU SEE, THE COMPOUND LITERALLY BONDS TO THE SKIN YET WASHES OFF WITH MILD SOAP, AND THE BONDING AGENT NEEDS TESTING FOR POTENTIAL SIDE EFFECTS--
NO TIME FOR THAT
BUT I'M AFRAID I MUST INSIST ON--
YOU'RE FIRED-- PICK UP YOUR $100,000 BONUS ON THE WAY OUT.
THE JANUS FORTUNES SHIFTED .
JANUS COSMETICS
JANUS WATERPROOF FACES
UNTIL.
THE RASH... GETTING WORSE... AND THE SKIN ON MY FACE... PEELING OFF...
DAMMIT, I TELL YOU IT'S THE NEW MAKEUP YOU BOUGHT!
IT'S GOT TO BE!

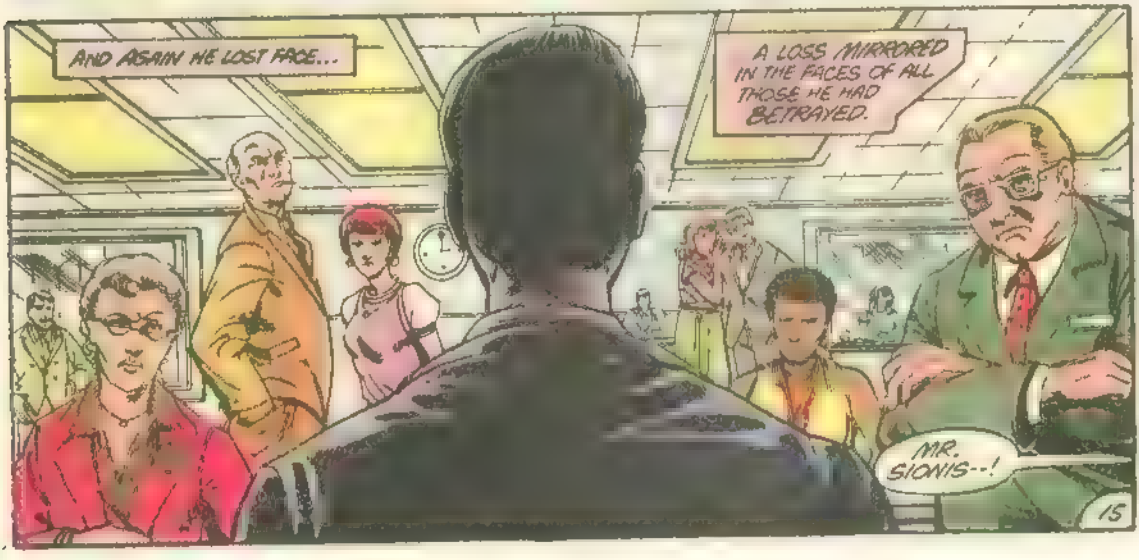

FOUR-HUNDRED-THIRTY-SEVEN LAWSUITS THIS WEEK ALONE-- ALL WATERPROOF MERCHANDISE WITHDRAWN-- VIRTUALLY NO PRODUCT ON THE MARKET-- AND NO EARNINGS.
WE'RE ON THE BRINK OF RUIN AND THE BANKS REFUSE TO BAIL US OUT.


THERE'S ONLY ONE HOPE REMAINING, ROMAN, AND IT'S--
ENOUGH-- I'VE HEARD ENOUGH.
JANUS

BUT THERE WAS MUCH MORE TO HEAR.
IT'S JUST LIKE YOU, ROMAN-- PROPOSING MARRIAGE WHILE I'M PACKING TO LEAVE
I'M NOT WASHED UP YET, CIRCE


IT'S NO USE, ROMAN-- IT'S GOTTEN AWAY FROM US. BESIDES, I'VE HAD OTHER OFFERS.
FOR YOUR MODELING OR YOUR HAND? FOR YOUR FACE, CIRCE-- OR YOUR SOUL?


IS THERE ANY DIFFERENCE?
THE END RESULT IS I'M LEAVING YOU, ROMAN-- YOU AND YOUR DAMNED MASKS-- FOREVER


AND AGAIN HE LOST FACE...
A LOSS MIRRORED IN THE FACES OF ALL THOSE HE HAD BETRAYED.
MR. SIONIS--!
15

WE JUST RECEIVED AN ANSWER FROM OUR LAST HOPE-- THE WAYNE FOUNDATION.
THEY'VE SAID YES, BUT ONLY ON ONE CONDITION...
IT WAS A GALLING ONE, ADVANCED TWO DAYS LATER-- YESTERDAY.
--THAT JANUS COSMETICS HENCEFORTH BE GOVERNED BY A NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS APPOINTED BY THE WAYNE FOUNDATION.
WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO SAY, MR-- LUCIUS FOX WAS IT?-- IS THAT I'M FROZEN OUT?
THE FIRM WILL STILL BE YOURS, MR. SIONIS, BUT YOU WILL NOT BE RUNNING IT
QUITE FRANKLY, WE WOULD NOT INVOLVE OURSELVES AT ALL--
--WERE IT NOT FOR THE FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THOMAS WAYNE AND YOUR FATHER
DO YOU AGREE TO THE BAIL-OUT TERMS?
...A NAME HE HAS COME TO DESPISE, TONIGHT, MORE THAN ANYTHING IN CREATION...
I HAVE LITTLE CHOICE, MR. FOX
BUT IT WAS THE LAST TIME HE WOULD EVER SIGN THIS NAME...
DAMN YOU, FATHER.
...SIMPLY AND SOLELY BECAUSE HE IS INCAPABLE OF DESPISING HIMSELF.
16

THE PAST RECEDES UNTIL THERE IS ONLY THE NOW A NOW OF HATE DEMANDING VENGEANCE
AND SINCE VENGEANCE UPON HIMSELF IS UN-THINKABLE...
DAMN YOU, FATHER!
...HE BLAMES FATE...
...THEREBY TEMPTING IT.
SLOT
CHOOOOM
UHN!
DROPPED.. AGAIN..
..JUST LIKE THE FIRST TIME I WAS BORN.
AGH-H!!
AND HE SEES THAT THE CRYPT DOOR HAS SWUNG WIDE
17

INSIDE, THE MATCHING EBONY CASKETS ARE STILL SEALED...
...FOR NOW
DO YOU HEAR ME, FATHER?! YOU'RE DEAD--
--BUT I'VE BEEN REBORN!
WE'RE BOTH DEAD, YOU HEAR ME?!
BUT I'VE BEEN RUDELY REBORN--
--DROPPED HARDER THAN THE FIRST TIME!!
KRAACH!
A PORTION OF THE DARK LID COMES AWAY IN HIS BLOODIED HANDS..
..REVEALING A MASK OF DEATH..
..CREATED BY THE LOSS OF FACE TO FIRE AND MAGGOTS.
THEN, HUNCHED IN A DANK CORNER...
...CLUTCHING THE EBONY SHARD OF DEATH...
...HE BEGINS TO GIGGLE...
HE LIFTS THE FRAGMENT.
...AND WITH THE DARK WOOD PRESSED TO HIS FACE HE WILL GIBBER AND DROOL FOR FIVE HOURS--BEFORE THINKING TO GO FOR A KNIFE.
18

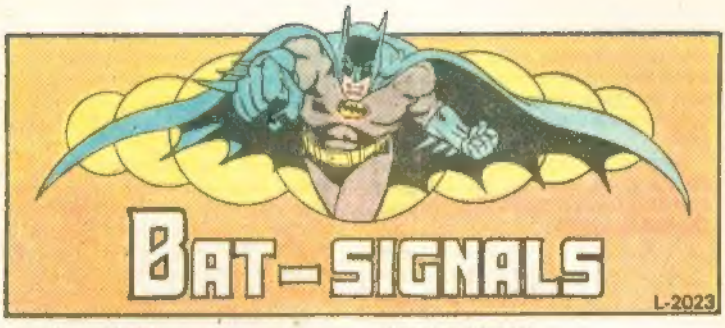
IT IS NOW SEVERAL DAYS LATER
NO CLOTHES OR VALUABLES, NO PERSONAL EFFECTS, WE'RE TAKEN FROM THE APARTMENT, COMMISSIONER--NOTHING AT ALL EXCEPT THE MASKS, EVERY LAST ONE OF THEM
AND THE BARE BUSTS SEEM ODDLY CHILLED
ALL RIGHT, THANKS FOR YOUR TIME
LET'S GET OVER TO THE CHEMISTRY LABS, BULLOCK.
THE COMPOUND WITH THE BONDING AGENT USED IN THE WATERPROOF FACES LINE--WE HAD IT LOCKED UP ON THIS SHELF SINCE THE LAWSUITS STARTED...
...BUT IT WAS MISSING THE DAY AFTER MR. SIONIS DISAPPEARED.
AND THE ONLY STUFF MISSING FROM THE SAFE AT HIS FAMILY ESTATE WAS A LOT O' CASH AND AN AUTOMATIC.
I DON'T GET IT, COMMISH...
WHY WOULD A GUY LIKE ROMAN SIONIS DISAPPEAR W.TH A GUN, A LOTTA MONEY, A BUNCHA MASKS, AND SOME DEFECTIVE MAKEUP GLOP?
WHAT THE HELL'S HE UP TO?
DONE
19

YOU SURE THIS IS THE PLACE?
I DON'T LIKE CRYPTS-- 'SPECIALLY ONE AS BIG AS A HOUSE WHY DON'T WE JUST KEEP THE TEN GRAND AND BLOW TOWN?
BECAUSE, MY FRIEND, THE MAN SAID THERE WAS PLENTY MORE WHERE THE TEN GRAND CAME FROM
YEAH, B-BUT--
OH LORD
APPROACH THE OTHER COFF N AND PREPARE FOR THE DEATH OF YOUR IDENTITIES.
PREPARE FOR INITIATION INTO THE FALSE FACE SOCIETY OF GOTHAM.
AND THE LID OF ONE COFFIN--THE SHATTERED ONE, WHENCE THE HOLLOW VOICE ISSUES BEGINS TO RISE, SLOWLY AT FIRST..
AND THEN--
OBEY ME! GO TO THE OTHER COFFIN--AND KNOW THAT THE MASK DESTROYS ONE IDENTITY WHILE CREATING ANOTHER!
KNOW THAT THE MASK RECREATES THE WEARER!
DO LIKE HE SAYS--OR HE'LL ICE US.
KNOW THAT THROUGH THE SUBLIMATION OF PERSONALITY, INHIBITIONS DIE--AND DEEPER DRIVES, MORE PRIMITIVE INSTINCTS, ARE BROUGHT TO THE SURFACE!
TWO MASKS STARE FROM THE OTHER CASKET.
MOTHER IS GONE
20

KNOW THAT THE MASK ITSELF RETAINS THE SPIRIT POWER OF THE MATERIAL FROM WHICH IT WAS MADE! KNOW THAT THE WEARER BECOMES THE MASK!
YOU ARE NOW THESPIS AND TIAENS--
--FIRST SOLDIERS OF AN ARMY WHICH WILL SOON ENGULF ALL OF GOTHAM--THE ARMY OF BLACK MASK
I AM BLACK MASK, AND I WILL MAKE YOU RICH.
I AM DEATH!
A MONTH PASSES, IN WHICH GOTHAM'S SHADOWS COME TO KNOW MANY MASKS..
WHO'S YOUR BOSS, THIEF?
HUH? THE BATMAN!
WHO DO YOU WORK FOR?
HRAK
WHO'S BEHIND THE NEW MASKED GANG?!
ANSWER ME!!
SHOK!
S-STOP..
W-WE WORK FOR B-BLACK MASK
BUT THE BATMAN'S ATTENTION IS DRAWN SKYWARD
21

WHILE, IN A MORE PROSPEROUS AREA OF THE CITY...
THE MAKEUP, THESPIS--PUT IT IN THE MASK.
GOOD--NOW PUT IT ON HIS FACE, TUPENG
GENTLY.. GENTLY..
GOOD--HE NEVER EVEN AWAKENED.
AND NOW...THE TIME HAS COME FOR THE SEASON OF THE WITCH
POLICE HEADQUARTERS
WHAT TIME--?!
KAPOW
A PRESENT
YOU CALLED ME?
BATMAN!
YES, BULLOCK'S DUG UP SOME INFO ABOUT THE NEW UNDER-WORLD LEADER.
HE CALLS HIMSELF--
BLACK MASK.
HUH? HOW D YOU KNOW--
THE PRESENT WAS ORIGINALLY WRAPPED IN THIS, BULLOCK.

WHAT? DON'T TOUCH A THING--WE'LL BE RIGHT OVER.
MURDER--THE NEW CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF JANUS COSMETICS.
AND HOW FARED THE NIGHT'S OTHER ENTERPRISES?
ALL SMOOTH, BLACK MASK--EXCEPT FOR ONE BREAK-IN BUSTED UP BY THE BATMAN...
SKLUTCH
OMIGAWD, COMMISH--LOOKS LIKE SOME KINDA MONSTER MASK...BUT IT'S HIS SKIN!
H-HOW--?
POISON ABSORBED THROUGH THE FACIAL PORES.
A CONCENTRATED MIXTURE OF THE BANNED JANUS COSMETICS SMEARED INSIDE THIS FIS MASK...MEANING BLACK MASK IS ROMAN SIONIS--WITH A DEATH-GRUDGE AGAINST THE EXECUTIVES APPOINTED BY THE WAYNE FOUNDATION...
YES... I SUPPOSE THE BATMAN WILL HAVE TO BE TAKEN CARE OF, EVENTUALLY--BUT RIGHT NOW I WANT YOU TO BEGIN WORK ON AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT SORT OF MAN.
HIS NAME IS... BRUCE WAYNE.
CONTINUED IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF 'TEC: THE FALSE FACE SOCIETY OF GOTHAM!



DC Comics Inc.
666 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10103

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Dear Len and Bob,

Two surprises awaited me the day BATMAN #382 arrived in my local comics shop. The first was Gil Kane's cover. The second was Rudy Nebres's inking of Rick Hoberg's artwork. Need I mention that both surprises were of a pleasant nature? The splendidly colored cover was a real eye-grabber, which sounds painful but, believe me, was quite the opposite. Colorist credit please?

While I hope Alfredo will be back soon to partner Rick, the team of Hoberg and Nebres produced some delightful art this issue. Rudy is a favorite artist of mine and I hope DC can offer him plenty of work in the future. I am of the opinion that it was Rudy's influence which did away with the heavy shadowing of Batman's features for this story and the result made for a pleasant change. (I am on record as preferring a less somber Batman, which includes the way he is drawn, so I was bound to be pleased.)

Doug handled the three-way conflict between Batman, Catwoman, and Darkwolf in his usual highly skilled manner. Did I say "usual"? Well, actually, it seemed to me that Doug decided to forego much of his customary intensely emotional scripting in favor of leaving the characters' feelings unspoken. Whether this was the case or I'm imagining things doesn't matter. "The Vengeance Spiral" was excellent. I doubt if any Bat-fan really believes Selina Kyle is dead and I hope we can look forward to her early return to these pages. Or maybe DC could allow the most fascinating villainess-cum-heroine in comics her own mini-series? Written by Doug, of course. Anyone care to second the motion?

Just to stop you from becoming complacent in your work, two questions. Whatever happened to Ace, the Bathound? Does anyone really care?

Dale Coe
41 Whitecross Road
Warrington, Cheshire WA5 1LR
England

Well, Dale, Ace is technically considered to be part of the Earth-2 continuity and by the end of the CRISIS maxi-series, we'll all know for sure. As for anybody caring, someone out there must miss the pooch.

On the subject of the cover, it was colored, as always, by Tony Tollin, one of our favorite colorists.

The subject of Selina Kyle's return after too-long an absence created a bit of a stir among the readers and here is a sampling of the commentary:

Dear Mr. Moench,

No! No! No! Okay, I could see Tara Markov's death, after I thought it out a while, but Catwoman is too fantastic a character to die!! Out of the entire Batman family, she is my favorite! (Followed closely by the Huntress.) You won't let me down, will you? Next issue she'll be back, right? Please?

Suspensefully hanging on the edge of my seat,

Rick Oberle
St. Louis, MO

*****

Dear Len and Bob,

God, what a disappointment BATMAN #382 turned out to be! After such a long absence, I expected much more from the return of the Catwoman. The Batman and Selina had a lengthy relationship in the past. I expected their reunion to contain a bit of soul-searching, some emotional conflict. Particularly considering Bruce's current involvement with Vicki/Julia/Nocturna, I had hoped for some sort of confrontation. I wanted to gain some insight into Selina's present feelings and her perspective on their past romance, its ending, and Batman's current romantic status. We didn't even get Batman's feelings concerning this. An encounter with Nocturna, had she stuck around, would also have been interesting. Would the two women be allies or rivals?

Instead, we are shown Catwoman's deep attachment to Diablo. This we were already aware of. It may have been Doug's intention to demonstrate that Catwoman's love for her panther exceeds any emotional bond to a male, but if so, it wasn't depicted beyond anything more than a plot device. The story's final line would have carried more weight if the tale preceding it was something more than a routine action yarn. As it was, "The Vengeance Spiral" seemed like more of a breather for Doug after his excellent Nocturna story line.

Great cover, tho.

Joe Rusnak
104 Park Place
Passaic, NJ 07055

*****

Dear Len, Doug,

I just finished BATMAN #382 and I am very disappointed that you may have killed off Catwoman. It is my hope that this is not so and that the answer to Batman's four questions on page 19, panel three, are a resounding YES. I hope we do not have to wait two years to find out that Catwoman survived!

I am also afraid that developments in the CRISIS maxi-series will not allow the single earth to have two Catwomen who are *not related*, but both named Selina Kyle.

Two- and three-issue stories interspersed with single-issue stories are fine, but the plot lines that ended in BATMAN #381 were too long and convoluted before they were resolved.

Ronald Bielkowski
No Address Given

*****

Dear Bat-People,

That was a very touching scene at the end of #382, as Batman grieved, his face turned away from us, at the loss of the Catwoman. However, pardon me if I'm not exactly convinced of her demise.

After years of reading comics, I've long since come to the conclusion that in a comic book, a death is not permanent unless you actually *see* the dead body *and* it is ground into ashes (or the equivalent), and even *then* there's still a chance the victim will return. Here, we are even given some *hope*, however small, that the Catwoman survived, so I've got to assume that she did. Maybe this time it will be different. Maybe you will kill off permanently a fairly major character without us seeing the character being sliced and diced. But I doubt it. I'm sorry if I seem cynical, but I've been fooled too many times in the past. The return of characters who should have been really and truly dead cheapens the emotions that the reader felt at the time and serves to make him a little more wary the next time and thus a little less able to experience the story's true intended impact. I can still believe deaths that are presented as definite, but borderline cases, such as this one, must be taken with a carload of salt. You in particular may not have sown the seeds of my skepticism, but you are reaping its whirlwind now.

In passing, I would like to note that since Gotham City is not a national capital, it could not have an embassy located within its boundaries, thus it must have been the Egyptian *Consulate* that was involved here. Now, I guess we can pass off this incorrect reference by Batman (page 6) by saying that he's no diplomat—though that doesn't explain the same error in the caption on page one.

T.M. Maple
Weston, ONT M9L2R9

Dear Bob,

Please convey my compliments to Doug Moench. "The Vengeance Spiral" was excellent.

In DETECTIVE #548 and BATMAN #382, Robin proved himself worthy of being Batman's partner. Distracting Darkwolf's attention on the runway was a dangerous game, and it wasn't easy missing the plane when he wanted with all his heart to join Batman. Jason Todd is a fit successor to Nightwing.

Cats have nine lives, they say. But in her careers as criminal and crime-fighter, has Catwoman used up all of hers? True, she did fall over dense forest, and she *may* have caught the parachute. Perhaps she's merely gone off somewhere to hide and heal and lick her wounds ... perhaps.

Julia Remarque-Pennyworth was right: Batman did (does) love Catwoman. Of the many women in Bruce Wayne's life, Selina Kyle is one of the few truly worthy of him. Julia is five years older than he is, and Vicki is no more than a dalliance. Kathy Kane is dead. Talia is a clinging vine; she would strangle Bruce. Ditto Nocturna. That leaves only Barbara Gordon and Selina Kyle.

Susan M. Murrie
3753 Mount Ashmun Place
San Diego, CA 92111

*****

Dear Doug & Len;

DON'T DO IT.

You CANNOT kill the Catwoman.

Selina Kyle is an integral part of the Batman mythos. To do away with her would be like removing the arm from the Statue of Liberty. Please, on behalf of all of the Catwoman fans throughout the world, keep her alive.

On another note, all of you did a fantastic job wrapping up the Hamilton Hill saga. I can't wait to see him on trial (the slimy little weasel)!

Ras Al Ghul? A resounding *YES!* Multipart vs. single-stories? I personally give the edge to the multis, but I imagine if you mix 'em up, you'll please a wider range of people (as long as you have plenty of subplots!).

Clark A. Novak
109 No. Barnwell
Oceanside, CA 92054

*****

Dear Sir,

You wouldn't dare! Not the Catwoman. When the Earth-2 Catwoman died, I said nothing. When Batwoman was so callously slain, I was again silent. When Karate Kid was so wantonly killed and Tara met her deserved end, I kept my peace. Now I must most strongly protest. How can you even consider the death of *The* Catwoman?

This is no ordinary supporting character, no spear carrier, no walk-on bit player. This is Selina Kyle, the Catwoman. A star. A shining example of good triumphant. Proof that some criminals can actually reform. The Catwoman is certainly as complex a character as the Batman. They complement each other. They love each other and in that love is conflict; the conflict of their past and their present. Will we now never know if that love overcomes their past?

Sorry, sometimes I ramble and get carried away. Just let me call your attention to BATMAN #382, page three. The defense rests.

John A. Leach
PO Box 284
Tahis, B.C. Canada
V0P 1X0

*****

Dear Bat People,

I've just finished reading BATMAN #382 and may I say I was not pleased at all. I feel compelled to say that I can only hope that Catwoman has not been killed off. I've always liked her even though she has been a criminal most of her life. also I liked it when she loved both Bruce Wayne and Batman. She did, didn't she? I remember that she used to anyway. And that always presented problems such as Batman not being able to sock her like he did with other villains like the Joker, also, Bruce always trying to help her with legal advice when she didn't want it.

But, I hope that if she has died, the Batman doesn't pine away forever. After all, he has (or I should say Bruce has) two more women to fall back on—Vicki Vale and Julia Remarque. I have read at various times that both women have expressed their interest in him.

I've been away from the title for awhile and in comics in general, but now I'm back, and if you people keep writing and drawing great stories like these, I'll be around for awhile. Also, I don't really like the crossovers between this title and TEC. Separately they're two of the greatest, but I never can find the issue a particular story is continued in.

Lastly, I'd like to say to the entire DC Comics line that you people are the Kings of the comic world. Keep up the good work and I'll be around for a long time.

John Fleig
4827 Robinwood Dr.
Mentor, OH 44060

While we continue to debate the one-part versus multipart stories in the pages of DETECTIVE, may we suggest you subscribe to our Bat-titles? Subscription information is always available in the small print on page one.

*****

Dear Editor,

"Symbolic" covers don't always work, and Gil Kane's cover on BATMAN #382 certainly didn't do the inside story any justice. The illustration of a giant Batman towering over fleeing hoods in no way conveyed the emotion and suspense of what transpired in Doug Moench's excellent "The Vengeance Spiral." I can only hope that the cover did not "turn off" the casual reader who may have passed this issue by.

I have suddenly become a charter member of the Rick Hoberg fan club, and I hope he will remain with this book for a lengthy stay. If Alfredo Alcala is not available, Rudy Nebres is a fine replacement as embellisher.

Veteran comics-readers may have once associated the name Doug Moench strictly with Marvel Comics, but the longer he remains as sole Batman author, the more synonymous that name is becoming with DC. He has reached his peak with this character.

All of which is a roundabout way of my congratulating everybody for a fine issue. Editor Wein has assembled an impressive team, and the evidence is a very memorable Batman story. (But that cover!)

Now ... Catwoman isn't really dead ... is she? Is she?

Greg W. Myers
120 Bluebird Circle
Elida, OH 45807

*****

COMING ATTRACTIONS

In two weeks, DETECTIVE #553 has Doug and Klaus Janson continuing the Black Mask saga. Black Mask is the newest—and maybe most deadly—member of the Rouges' gallery. By all means let us know what you think. Be back here in a month when Doug and Tom Mandrake continue the story as things get out of hand.

For those with keen eyes, Rick Hoberg has departed from these pages after a short but impressive stint. Len and I welcome aboard Tom Mandrake, fresh from finishing the wonderful SPANNER'S GALAXY mini-series. Let us also know what you think of Tom's work.

Elsewhere this month, CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS #6 begins showing what has happened to the worlds as a result of the Monitor's death. More heroes and villains turn up as time is thrown out of kilter and the impossible becomes possible. Also, Jerry Ordway joins the team as inker and trust us, the stuff looks terrific!

Next week, WHO'S WHO #6 reaches the stands with the Doctors, including Bat-foes Deadshot, Dr. Phosphorus, and Dr. Double-X. We also include Darkseid, Deadman, Dark Opal, Dr. Occult, and, yes, Detective Chimp. As always, written and edited by Len with some of the most amazing art by the most distinguished names in the business.

Until next time, take care and keep smiling!

—Bob Greenberger

MEANWHILE...

The British are coming! The British are coming!

That's good news! For **DC** and its readers.

A few years ago, Joe Orlando and I crossed the "pond" to England to address a professional group of British cartoonists, acquaint them with **DC**'s policies and rate structures, and tell them that we were anxious to establish an ongoing creative relationship with them. Our talk was well received and we came home feeling that our message had been heard and, at the very least, some long-lasting friendships had been established.

By the time Mike W. Barr's and British artist Brian Bolland's breathtaking, trend-setting maxi-series **CAMELOT 3000** was released, I was in charge of **DC**'s editorial department and really glad that Brian had opted to throw in with us.

Since then, the trickle of talent from across the pond has become a flood. We have watched in awe as Alan Moore redefined **SWAMP THING**, cheered at the exciting new heights reached when Dave Gibbons drew **GREEN LANTERN**, breathed some fresh air with the absolutely unique art of Kevin O'Neill (who has popped up here and there, most notably in a recent issue of **OMEGA MEN**), and had a real blast reading that wonderful two-part **VIGILANTE** story set in New York but written by Alan Moore in the English countryside and illustrated by Jim Baikie, who resides in Scotland. (Jim, by the way, is currently drawing the origin of Brother Blood for a **TEEN TITANS SPECIAL**.)

To show her appreciation for jobs well done, President-Publisher Jenette Kahn recently took some 30 writers and artists to dinner in London when she went to England on business. The dinner was held at the Savoy Hotel, a posh locale of which Dave Gibbons commented, "I didn't think I was good enough to even walk in front of the building."

The dinner, everyone tells me, was a smashing success. Everyone had a good time and Jenette let everyone know that **DC** is still looking for new talent and new ideas. All I had to do was sit back and wait. Sure enough, in less time than it takes to say "British Airways," the proposals started washing up against my door. After digging my way through submissions, I was pleased to see a high level of quality ... at least equal to the level we get from my colleagues here in America. And so in the coming year, you will be seeing (at the very least) a graphic novel by Pat Mills and Kevin O'Neill with the working title **ARMAGEDDON**; an issue of the **DC CHALLENGE** penciled by the fast-drawing Dave Gibbons and inked by Mark Farmer; Vega tales in the back of **OMEGA MEN** by Steve Parkhouse, Alan Moore, and Kevin O'Neill; at least 12 issues of **BATMAN AND THE OUTSIDERS** by Alan Davis; and a very special maxi-series from Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons—one I mentioned in a previous column ... and still hush-hush.

When Editor Bob Greenberger was going to London for holiday in early January (see, I can speak like an Englishman), I asked him to meet with a number of the writers and artists to follow up on business we began doing by mail. When he returned, rested and bursting with good cheer, he made the following report:

"The British writers and artists are much like a fraternity. They gather regularly at a pub across the street from Forbidden Planet, the largest comics shop in the country. As is the local custom, they bought each other rounds of drinks and no one ever kept a tab. Despite a smoke-filled room, everyone gathered around a table and chatted away ... usually swapping tales about people not in the room.

"From what I can gather, most of these gents have grown up on **DC Comics** and working for us is a dream of sorts come true. For example, both Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons admitted an unending devotion to Tommy Tomorrow, a character who hasn't appeared in his own series in over 18 years! And every time one of them comes to America, they usually hover around Julie Schwartz's office, hoping for spare copies of his older titles, in order to complete their collections. Julie, I have learned, gets most of these guys to say yes to assignments by promising to give them hard-to-find back issues.

"On the first day, I had lunch with Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, spending the afternoon discussing their maxi-series. Later we shared Indian food with Alan Davis, Mark Farmer, and Mike McMahon. All but Mike have been doing work for us, and try as I might, I couldn't wheedle a commitment out of Mike. He said when his current commitments are finished, he'll see what we have to offer. Meantime, Alan Davis explained that he has had to rethink his drawing because this is the first time he's working in full color from start to finish. Many of the British weekly comics use color sparingly and no story is ever completely in color. He's been coloring in photostats of his **BATO** pages just to get some idea of how his work will look.

"Mark is looking forward to his issue of **CHALLENGE** and is spending some of his free time illustrating children's books in England. Everyone is really very pleasant and relaxed about their jobs, without any of the seeming pressure felt by many of the creators back in the States.

"The next night I was treated to Indonesian cuisine by Nick Landau of Eagle Comics. We were joined by Brian Bolland, Steve Moore, Steve Parkhouse, Kevin O'Neill, and the always gregarious Dave Gibbons. Everything seemed to go all right until Nick handed me a plate and suggested I sample the squid. Yipe!

"Anyway, Steve Parkhouse explained that he had been completing assignments for the British comics publishers and was looking forward to doing a great deal of work for **DC**. In addition to a few **VEGA** stories, Steve will probably contribute ideas for graphic novels and one-shot tales. Steve Moore, on the other hand, has already submitted one maxi-series and one graphic novel proposal. He's **serious** about wanting to work with us. And Brian mentioned the night before that he has a hard time saying no.

"There were others I wanted to meet and speak with, but either there wasn't enough time or they were unavailable. From what I can gather, though, the people over there are more than eager to do work for us."

No more eager than I am to have them work for us, Bob. Thank you for the report, and I'm glad you had so much fun.

Hmm. Now that Bob and Jenette have been over there, I wonder when I get my turn to go to London and take these guys out?

Thank you and good afternoon.

Dick

DC CHECK LIST

ON SALE THE WEEK OF MAY 16

☐ **RED TORNADO 2**: The Construct makes his move as Superman takes the Tornado apart!

☐ **BATMAN 386**: Meet the latest nemesis, the Black Mask!

☐ **THE FLASH 348**: Flash's Rogues' Gallery is in danger, and the jury reaches a verdict!

☐ **SUPERMAN 410**: Clark Kent is fired when Superman disavows a story!

☐ **STAR TREK® 17**:Uhura, Sulu, and Bearclaw go undercover and confront a man from Uhura's past!

☐ **AMETHYST 8**: Fire Jade's identity is revealed, and Citrina's fate is decided!

☐ **JEMM, SON OF SATURN 12**: The gripping conclusion: Does Jemm find Syrra? Do Jemm and Luther part?

☐ **ARAK, SON OF THUNDER 47**: A magical menace in China threatens Arak!

☐ **OMEGA MEN 29**: At the nerve center of Wombworld, the truth about the Psions!

☐ **LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES 13**: Timber Wolf travels to a brutal planet to fulfill Karate Kid's will!